

THE OINVĀRA PERIOD—A GOLDEN AGE IN THE HISTORY OF MITHILĀ

By

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The Oinvāras who succeeded the Karṇāṭas in 1324 A.D. were Brāhmaṇas hailing from village Oini near Pusa Road in the district of Darbhanga. Kāmeshvara Thākura, the founder of the dynasty was the Prime Minister of the last Karṇāṭa ruler Harisimhadeo. In 1324, Sultan Ghyasuddin Tughlak of Delhi on return from Bengal invaded the territory of Mithilā. Harisimhadeo faced him boldly. Being defeated the Rājā with his army marched into the forest of Nepal and occupied possession over the whole of the Nepal Valley. The Sultan then appointed Kāmeshvara Thākura the ruler of Mithilā which by this time came to be known as Tirhut.¹ Kāmeshvara Thākura was succeeded by his son Rājā Bhogishvara and Bhogishvara was succeeded by his son Rājā Gaṇeshvara. Rājā Kirti Simha immortalised by the world renowned poet Vidyāpati in his famous work '*Kirttilatā*' was the son and successor of Rājā Gaṇeshvara. Kirti Simha sought the help of Sultan Ibrahim Shah, the Sirki Sultan of Jaunpur in crushing the rising of the Muslim chiefs of Tirhut. In the '*Kirttilatā*' Vidyāpati has depicted a beautiful picture of his visit to Jaunpur. He died after a short reign and was succeeded by Bhavasimha who could rule only for a few years. Since Kirti Simha and his brother Bhava Simha both died childless, the throne of Tirhut passed over to their uncle Deo Simha. He was very old at the time of his accession to the throne. So his son the crown prince Shivasimha was made the real administrator. Shiva declared Mithilā independent of the Sharki yoke. The Sultan invaded Mithilā. While the war was going on Deo Simha expired making room for succession of the crown prince to the throne. Shiva boldly faced his enemies and defeating them in a series of battles performed the śrāddha ceremony of his father in a befitting manner (1412-13 A.D.).²

¹ S. N. Singh, *History of Tirhut*.

² अनलरंघ कर लखन नरबए, एक समुह कर अगिनि ससी ।
चैतकारि छठि जेठा मिलिओ बार बेटप्पए जाउ लसी ।
देवसिंह जस पुटवीं छड़िऊ अखासन सुरराए सह ।
डहू सुहतान नींदे अबे सोअऊ तपन हीन जग तीमिरे भर ।
देखहु ओ पृथिवी के राजा पीरुल माझ पुत्र बलिओ ।
सतबले गंगा मिलित कलेवर देवसिंह सुरपुर बलिओ ॥
एक दिस सकल जवन बल बलिओ ओका दिसि से जमराय वर ।
इअओ दलहि मनोरथ पूरेओ गरुड दाप सिवसिंह कर ।
सुरतर कुसुम घालि दिसि इरेओ, दुहुहि सुंदर साव वर ।
बीर छत्र देखन को कारन सुरजन सते गगन भर ॥

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Now he contracted friendship with Rājā Gaṇesh who having killed the grandson of Ajam Shah had become the ruler of Bengal.³ Sultan Ibrahim Shah invaded Bengal in 1414 A.D. Shiva came to the help of Raja Gaṇesh and defeated the army of the Sultan. Rājā Gaṇesh made peace with the Sultan. The Sultan with a view to wreaking vengeance on Shivasimha invaded Mithilā. Shivasimha fought bravely and was killed in the battlefield. Rānī Lakhimā with females in the royal household sought shelter at Rāj Banauli in the court of Rājā Purāditya, the Dronvāra Brāhmaṇa Rājā of Saptari in Nepal. Vidyāpati accompanied them. Lawlessness prevailed in Mithilā for about a dozen of years and Sultan Ibrahim Shah was forced to declare Padma Simha, the younger brother of Shivasimha the ruler of Mithilā. Padma Simha ruled for a few years and was succeeded by his wife Viśvāsa Devī. After the death of Viśvāsa Devī the Crown passed over to Hari Simha, a posthumous son of Raja Bhava Simha by his third wife. Darpa Nārāyaṇa who succeeded Hari Simha died making room for the succession of Dhīra Simha. He was succeeded by his brother Harinārāyaṇa popularly known as Bhairava Simha. The ruins of the palace of Harinārāyaṇa have been excavated near Pandaul, N.E. Rly. Station in Darbhanga district. He was succeeded by his younger brother Chandra Nārāyaṇa who was succeeded by his first wife the renowned scholar Rānī Lakhimā Thakurāin.⁴ Rānī Lakhimā was succeeded by Rūpanārāyaṇa Rāmabhadra. Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa alias Ripu Kaṁsa Nārāyaṇa, the last of the Oinvāra rulers, expired in 1549-50.⁵ The successors of Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa could not maintain their supremacy over Mithilā. The State broke into pieces and the territory owned by Oinvaras was confined to a number of villages around and the capital 'Sugāon' which till late continued to be in their possession in the form of Zamindari.

अरिभिर्भ्रंतेहि महामल राजसूय असमेध जहाँ ।
पंडित धर आचार बखानिअ जाचक काँ धर दान कहाँ ॥
विज्जावई कविवर एहु गावए मानव मन आनंद भएओ ॥
सिंहासन सिवसिंह वईदठो उच्छवे बैरस बिसरि गएओ ॥
—विद्यापति

यो गोडेश्वर गज्जनेश्वर रणक्षोणीषु—
लब्ध्वा यशोदिवर्काता चयकुंतलेषु जयते कुन्दलजा मास्वदम् ।
तस्य श्री शिवसिंह देव नृपते बिप्र प्रियस्याजया ग्रंथ ग्रंथिल
दंडनीति विषये विद्यापतिव्यतिनोत् ॥

—पुरुष-परीक्षा (विद्यापति)

शौर्यावर्जित गौड गज्जन महीपालो पनप्रीकृता नेकोत्तुगं मतंग गजाश्व
कनकच्छात्राभि रामो दयः ।

—शैवसर्वस्वसार (विद्यापति)

³ This statement lacks corroborative evidence. On the other hand, Mithilā-tradition and literary evidences clearly suggest that Lakhimā was the beloved queen of king Shivasimha, and not of Candranārāyaṇa (cf. Thakur, *History of Mithilā*, chap. VI; R. K. Choudhary's paper, "The Oinavāras of Mithilā" in *JBRs*, vol. xl, 1954). Vidyāpati has, in his poems, referred to them at numerous places. [Editor].

⁵ The date should be c. 1530 A.D. and not 1549-50 A.D. (cf. *Ibid*) [Editor].

Development of Sanskrit Literature

The Oinvāra rulers were mostly great scholars and very fond of learning. Having received royal patronage different branches of Sanskrit literature developed to the fullest extent. The poet Vidyāpati Thākura was a minister and the chief court scholar of Shiva Simha. Besides his popular songs in Maithili he compiled in Sanskrit the *Varsha Kṛitya* the *Bhū-parikramā*, the *Durgābhakti Tarāṅgiṇī*, the *Dāna Vakyāvalī*, the *Purusha Parikshā*, the *Gaṅgā Vakyāvalī*, the *Vibhāgasāra*, the *Saiva Sarvasva*. Pakshadhara Miśra was a boyhood friend of the poet. Jaideva was the original name of Pakshadhara. It is in this name that he composed his famous dramatic work '*Prasanna Rāghava*'. His commentary '*Āloka*' on Gaṅgeshopādhyāya's '*Tattvachintāmaṇi*' is considered to be the original work on the Navya system of Hindu philosophy. Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma the renowned Naiyāyika of Nawadwip was his classmate and Raghunātha Śiromaṇi was his chief pupil. It was Raghunātha Śiromaṇi who introduced the Navya Nyāya system in Bengal. Pakshadhara's uncle Hari Miśra who was also his preceptor and the preceptor of Vidyāpati was the greatest Naiyāyika of the age. Unfortunately his works are not available to us these days. It was during the Oinvāra period that Śaṅkara Miśra, a descendent of the renowned grammarian Baruruchi, was born at Sarisaw-Pahitola, a village in the Darbhanga district. Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhavanātha Miśra, father of Śaṅkara, never sought favour from anybody in life and so he is still being remembered as 'Ayāchi Miśra'. Amongst the works of Śaṅkara the *Vaisheshika Sūtropaskar*, the *Anumāna Chintāmaṇi* *Mayūshah*, the *Gauri-Digamber Prahasan*, the *Bhedaratna*, the *Kantakoddhara*, the *Rasārṇava*, the *Vādi-Vinoda* and the *Chandoganhnik* are masterpieces. It is said शंकर वाचस्पत्यौ शंकरवाचास्पति सदृशौ । पक्षधर प्रतिपक्षी लक्ष्मी भूतो न च क्वापि ।"

The love of Shivasimha for literature has immortalised him in the hearts of Maithili speaking people. Even children are heard repeating the saying

"पोखरि रजोखरि श्रीर सब पोखरा राजा शिवसिंह श्रीर सब छोकरा ।"

In the name of Simha Bhūpāla he compiled *Saṅgita Ratnākara*, the *Vyākhyā Saṅgita* and the *Rasārṇava Sudhāra*. Rājā Harinārayan alias Bhairavasimha, one of the successors of Rājā Shiva Simha invited all the scholars of Mithilā to some ceremonial function in the Royal household. It is said that Naiyāyikas assembled on the occasion numbered one thousand.* Śrī Dattopādhyaya, the author of the '*Sapta Padārth ka*', flourished in the fourteenth century A.D. Vardhamānopādhyāya who installed the image of God Shiva at Deokuliādham in Darbhanga district compiled the *Smṛiti Paribhāsha*, the *Kiraṇāvalī Prakāsha* and the *Gayā Paddhati*. All his works on Dharmashāstra are of great importance. Mahāmattak (Prime Minister) Gaṇeshvara, a fore-father of Poet Vidyāpati, compiled in the fourteenth century A.D. the *Dāna Ratnākara*, the *Vivāha Ratnākara*, the *Śrāddha Ratnākara*,

* This grand conference of Naiyāyikas is said to have been held under the patronage of Rānī Vīrvāsa Devī [Editor].

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the *Vyavahāra Ratnākara*.⁷ Mahāmahopādhyāya Govind Thākura at the request of the mother of Mammata Bhaṭṭa, the author of '*Kāvya Prakāśha*' wrote his famous commentary '*Pradīpa*' on the book. He hailed from village Bhatsimar in Darbhanga district. Mahāmahopādhyāya Keśava Miśra who belonged to the Oinvara Royal family by the side of his mother is the author of famous books on Dharmashāstra the *Dvaita Parishishṭa*, the *Sāṃkhya Parimāṇa* and the *Tārābhāshya*. It is he who has decried Vidyapati for having begged grant of villages from the ruler.⁸ Mahāmahopādhyāya Kalyāṇadharā's '*Sushlist Parishishṭa*' is a commentary on the '*Dvaita Parishishṭa*'. His pupil Murāri Miśra II compiled the '*Subhakarmanirṇaya*' which is still being held in high esteem. The '*Āchāra Viveka*', the '*Prāyaschitta Viveka*' and the '*Prāyaschitta Sulphani*' by Sulphani Upādhyāya are also of high importance. The '*Āloka Parishishṭa*' and the '*Tattvachintāmaṇi*' by Devanatha Upādhyāya of the same period are by no means of less importance. Mahāmahopādhyāya Ruchipati Upādhyāya who flourished during the period wrote commentary on the '*Anargha Rāghava*'. Mahāmahopādhyāya Indramani Thākura, the author of the *Mīmāṃsā-Rasā-Pallava* flourished in the fifteenth century A.D. It was during this period that the well-known Jyotishāchārya Madhusūdana wrote his famous book on astrology the '*Jyotisha Pradīpankara*'. Madhusūdana Thākura compiled the *Kaṇṭakoddhāra*, the *Samaya-Pradīpa-Jīrṇoddhāra*, the *Tattvachintāmanyāloka* and the *Dvaita Nirṇaya Jīrṇoddhāra*.⁹

Rānī Lakhimā, the well-known scholar and for some time the ruler of Mithilā is the compiler of the famous books on Nyāya *Padārtha Chandra* and the '*Nyāya Chandra*'. The author of the book '*Vāṇībhūṣaṇa*' on Sanskrit Prosody Mahāmahopādhyāya Dāmodara Miśra was a court scholar of Rājā Kirti Simha and Ratnapāṇi Thākura, the author of the '*Kāvya Darpaṇa*', a commentary on the '*Kāvya Prakāśha*' adorned the court of Rājā Shivasimha. His son Ravi Thākura also wrote a commentary on the said book under caption, the '*Madhumati*'.

The well known poet Gaṅgānanda flourished in the sixteenth century A.D. He wrote the *Kāvya Bhūṣaṇa*, the *Kavya Dākini*, the *Śrīngāra Vanamālā* and the *Bhrīṅga Dūta*. Keshava Miśra II compiled the *Alaṅkāra Shekhara*, the *Alaṅkāra Sarvasva* and the *Kāvyaratna*. All throughout his life he enjoyed the patronage of Rājā Manirchand of Kangara. Poet Baṭeshwar Jhā wrote commentary on the drama, the '*Mudrā Rākshasa*' in the fifteenth century A.D. Bhikshu, the author of the *Vivādashandra* and the *Padārtha Chandra*,¹⁰ Vāsudeva Miśra, the famous commentator on the *Nyāya-Saṃgha Tattva Chintāmaṇi* and Ruchidatta, the well known commentary writer were his contemporaries. Bhīmopādhyāya, who wrote commentaries on the *Gītā Śāṅkara*, the *Kṛitya Darpaṇa* and the *Kumāra*

⁷ The author of these *Ratnākara*s was Candēśvara, the Prime-minister of the last Karpāta ruler, Harisimphadeva, and not Gaṇeśvara.—[Editor]

⁸ लुब्ध नगरयाचक

⁹ The author of *Vivādashandra* was Misara Miśra and not one Bhikṣu. The book is already published. [Editor]

Samhava and *Makalopādhyāya*, the author of the '*Satranja Prabandha*' and a renowned astrologer also flourished in this century. It was during this century that the famous book on astrology called the '*Nilakanṭha*' was compiled by *Mahāmahopādhyāya Nilakanṭha Jhā* who was granted the *Zagir* of *Parganna Jakhampur* in the district of *Darbhanga*.

The Growth of Maithili Literature

Rājā Shivasimha and *Rājā Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa*, the two of the *Oinvāra* rulers although great scholars of *Sanskrit* gave due encouragement to the growth of the local language, *Maithili*. *Vidyapati* compiled his famous work the *Kirttilatā* and composed his immortal songs. *Shivasimha* in names of *Simha Bhūpāla* and *Nripa Simha* composed verses in *Maithili* also¹⁰. *Govinda Dāsa* who is considered to be next to *Vidyapati* adorned the court of *Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa* alias *Ripu Kāṁsa Nārāyaṇa*. Like *Shivasimha* *Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa* also composed verses in *Maithili*¹¹. *Mahāmahopādhyāya Umāpati Upādhyāya* who composed the first *Maithili* drama the *Pārijātaharāṇa* belonged to village *Koilakh* in the district of *Darbhanga* and flourished during this period.

Conclusion

Oinvāra ruled over *Mithilā* from 1324 A.D. to 1530. During this period of two centuries *Mithilā* progressed rapidly in the field of literature both classical and vernacular. All the branches of *Sanskrit* learning attained perfection and most of the notable books were compiled during this period. *Maithili* having received state patronage also developed satisfactorily. It is for these reasons that this period is described as the golden age in the history of *Mithilā*.

- ¹⁰ भौसे पल्ले उगय कलानिधि लइये सकल निज साज ।
तुम मुख सम नहि देखिय तैं खिन मने गुनि लाज ॥
कहुवतु कप्रीन पुरुष घनि, जाहि करि रह अनुराग ।
के अछि एहि महीतल, जे अरजस एहन भाग ॥
सामर चामर निदय, कोमल केस कलाप ।
भौह मनोहर कर कष, काम तेजल सरचाप ॥
पवन बलित नव पल्लव, कुचकोरक तरे काँप ॥
घक धामोल नहि पाओल, आसा लुबधललाम ।
एहन रमनि 'नृपसिंह' कह, हरहि निकट पए सोम ॥—राजा शिवसिंह
- ¹¹ कुंदन कनक कन्हारि, हमहुँ कसौटी तूल ।
निज हिय कसल बालम गुन, बूझल बहु मूल ॥
ए सखि सुपह समागम, सुख कहई न जाय ।
मन कर मनाओ न छोड़िय, राखिय हिय लाय ॥
पुरुष गौरि हमें पूजली, पूने परित नेह ॥
जीव एक कए मानल की जमो दूई रहे ॥
लक्ष्मीनारायन नृप कह, तोहें गुनपति नारि ।
जासी नते बढावत, सैह देव मुरारि ॥—राजा लक्ष्मीनारायण

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